

CfDS: Protect the Night

About the Commission for Dark Skies: Protect the Night

The British Astronomical Association (BAA) is the UK's largest body representing the interests of all those - astronomers and non-astronomers - who appreciate the beauty of the night sky and value it as a natural resource. The starry sky is, unofficially but indubitably, a **site of special scientific interest** and an **area of outstanding natural beauty**: if it can be seen.

The Commission for Dark Skies (CfDS) was set up by concerned members of the BAA in 1989, to counter the ever-growing tide of skyglow which has tainted the night sky over Britain since the 1950s. Usually the result of poorly aimed public and private lights, often sports lighting, emitting light above the horizontal into the sky, skyglow has stolen the stars from more than 90% of the UK population.

CfDS has grown into a national network of volunteer local officers and committed supporters who work to persuade their local councils and organisations of the benefits of well-directed lighting. Our motto is: **the right amount of light, when and where needed.**

Light pollution is a **world-wide** problem. The good news is that the message from organisations such as the CfDS is starting to be more widely accepted, and in some cases the trend is going into reverse as administrations and organisations begin to adopt a more environmentally sensitive approach to lighting and the environment.

These photos of Bath, taken 50 years apart, show how our night skies have deteriorated due to light pollution.



Should we put all the lights out?

Of course not!. We need light at night for many reasons.

Better lighting saves energy and therefore is environmentally and economically beneficial.

Better lighting gives us back something like the dark skies that people enjoyed long ago.

The light from the rest of the Universe takes hundreds, thousands or millions of years to reach our eyes. What a pity to lose it in the last millisecond of its journey!



Contact the Commission for Dark Skies: Protect the Night

<http://www.britastro.org/dark-skies> Publication number: CfDS1507_A_about_cfds_aims

Aims of the Commission for Dark Skies

The CfDS wants to see:

- Greater use of modern fittings which control the light emitted, to minimise sky-glow and light trespass.
- The right amount of light for the task, not wasteful over-lighting. Sensible wattages are needed. A 40W light will adequately illuminate the average driveway and garden.
- Controls on floodlighting of buildings, sports facilities, etc., with appropriate switching, shielding, baffles and mounting adaptation, causing lamps to shine where the light is actually needed, and only when needed.
- Instructions about sensitive mounting, and information about light intrusion and other possible adverse effects, in the packaging of all exterior lights.

The CfDS believes that:

- Astronomers have the same lighting needs as everyone else.
- If part-night switch-offs of streetlights prove beneficial, they should continue.
- Everyone should have the right to illuminate their premises at night if they so wish, as long as it does not intrude into neighbouring properties.
- Lamps used should comply with Institution of Lighting Professionals' guidelines, with 150W as a maximum value for typical domestic and small-scale commercial premises;
- In the absence of proper regulation of light, which is as much of a potential pollutant as noise and other impactors, manufacturers and retailers should take the lead in preserving a sensitively lit night-time environment.
- The promotion of outdoor lighting should concentrate on aspects of visibility and careful lighting, rather than making debatable claims about crime deterrence and links between brightness and effectiveness.

Well-designed light sources emit no light above the horizontal. Unshielded lights may emit much of their output above the horizontal.

Glare from roadside lights is another result of poor design, and is distracting when driving.

The CfDS believes that the control of light pollution is an idea whose time has come. In an era when the environment, energy considerations and the surge in discoveries about the Universe are matters of everyday discussion, it makes sense to reclaim our heritage.

